

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 EUR-25 AID-20 OMB-01 DRC-01

/176 W

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R 121315Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8898

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SF

SUBJ: UNITED PARTY ADOPTS A MORE VERLIGTE LINE

1. SKILLFULLY PLANNED AND MANAGED NATIONAL CONGRESS OF UNITED PARTY (UP) AT BLOEMFONTEIN NOV 7 - 10 DEMONSTRATED THAT SIR DE VILLIERS GRAAFF MAINTAINS FIRM CONTROL OF PARTY AND THAT HE HAS SANCTIONED MORE LIBERAL CAST TO ITS POLICIES. CONFRONTATION BETWEEN "YOUNG TURK" LIBERALS AND UP CONSERVATIVES DID NOT MATERIALIZE.

2. ALTHOUGH CONSIDERABLE CREDIT FOR MORE VERLIGTE LOOK OF UP MUST BE ACCORDED TO HARRY SCHWARZ AND HIS TRANSVAAL LIEUTENANTS, AT BLOEMFONTEIN SOME LEADING FIGURES IN PARTY TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT IT A MISTAKE TO LABEL CONGRESS A "TRIUMPH" FOR YOUNG TURKS, AS SOME OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS HAVE DONE. THEY MAINTAINED THAT POLICY DEPARTURES ACCEPTED BY CONGRESS WERE CAREFULLY DRAWN UP BY PARTY SECRETARIAT AND APPROVED BY GRAAFF SEVERAL WEEKS BEFORE CONGRESS CONVENED IN BLOEMFONTEIN. NEVERTHELESS, HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR 1972 SUCCESS OF LIBERALS IN DEPOSING

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OF MARAIS STEYN AS TRANSVAAL UP LEADER AND THEIR PERSISTENCE IN

PRESSING FOR CHANGE, IT UNLIKELY CONSERVATIVES' GRIP ON PARTY WOULD HAVE BEEN SO WEAKENED. CLEARLY, WITWATERSRAND-BASED REFORM MOVEMENT HAS EXTENDED ITS INFLUENCE IN UP.

3. IN SPEECH TO CONGRESS DELEGATES NOVEMBER 8, GRAAFF OUTLINED UP'S BASIC POLICIES. WHITE LEADERSHIP OF SA MUST CONTINUE FOR PRESENT, BUT ITS AIM SHOULD BE TO "BRING ABOUT A SHARING OF POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY AMONG ALL OUR COMMUNITIES." UP COMMITTED TO ATTAIN FEDERAL SYSTEM IN WHICH ALL SOUTH AFRICANS WOULD HAVE COMMON CITIZENSHIP AND EVERYONE WOULD BE GUARANTEED BASIC FREEDOMS. GRAAFF SPOKE OF A COMPASSIONATE SOCIETY AND NEW ERA OF SOCIAL JUSTICE. HE VIGOROUSLY DEFENDED FREEDOM OF PRESS. HE CHARACTERIZED RULING NATIONAL PARTY AS "SECURITY RISK," ASSERTING THAT GOVT'S POLICIES HAVE LED TO GROWING ESTRANGMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN BLACKS AND INCREASED ISOLATION OF SA BY REST OF WORLD.

4. COMMENT: PERCEPTIBLE SHIFT OF UP POLICIES SUGGESTS THAT UP WILL NOW STAND AS MORE DISTINCT ALTERNATIVE TO NATIONAL PARTY. HOWEVER, UP IN ANY FORM REMAINS AN ALTERNATIVE THAT MOST WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS WILL NOT ACCEPT, AND UP FACES YET ANOTHER DEFEAT IN NEXT GENERAL ELECTIONS FOR WHITE PARLIAMENT. NEVERTHELESS, SIGNIFICANCE OF UP'S RELATIVELY MORE ENLIGHTENED STANCE ON RACE RELATIONS CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED ENTIRELY. IT IS ANOTHER MANIFESTATION OF CHANGING ATTITUDES AND, TO LESSER EXTENT, PRACTICES IN RACE RELATIONS IN THIS COUNTRY. BUT LIKE SO MANY OTHER THINGS HERE, IT HAS COME ABOUT PAINFULLY SLOWLY AND AS YET HAS LITTLE MEANING FOR SOUTH AFRICA'S BLACK MAJORITY.

HURD

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY LINE, PARTY LEADERS, POLITICAL FREEDOM
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973PRETOR04112
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: PRETORIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731139/aaaabcvw.tel
Line Count: 89
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11-Jan-2002 by martinjw>; APPROVED <07 MAR 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UNITED PARTY ADOPTS A MORE VERLIGTE LINE
TAGS: PINT, SOCI, SF, UNITED PARTY, (GRAAF, DE VILLIERS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005